**CATTLE EGRET**
*Bulbulcus ibis*
**STATUS:** No current listing

*Distribution and Movements*
Cattle egrets are relatively recent immigrants to North America, and their range is still expanding. In the northwest, their northward breeding limit is currently along a line extending from northeastern California and southeastern Oregon to northeastern Montana. In Idaho, this northern boundary roughly follows the northern edge of the Snake River Plain.

Post-breeding dispersal is pronounced in this species, and birds may move in any direction from their breeding areas from July through early September. From September through November, Cattle Egrets move southward to winter in Mexico and parts of California. Spring migration occurs from February to April.

*Habitat and Nesting*
Cattle Egrets feed in open pastures, fields, meadows, and dry open country, especially where livestock is present. During dispersal or migration, they may feed in vacant lots, lawns, and road shoulders. Their prey consists primarily of insects, especially grasshoppers, which become vulnerable after being flushed by domestic animals or similar disturbance; they have been seen following plows. Frogs, lizards, and some small mammals are also eaten.

These egrets breed on islands or in willows or tamarisks along water, and breeding is colonial with other herons and ibises. The nest is 10-18 inches (25-45cm) in diameter with a depression 3-9 inches (7.5-22cm) deep, and is placed off the ground in willows or similar vegetation. Construction is of twigs, and nest height is typically from 3-30 feet (1-10m). Clutch size ranges from 2-5 eggs; 3-4 eggs is the most common number.

*Survey Results*
Since 1984, there has been a four to five-fold increase in the number of Cattle Egret nests in southern Idaho. This increase reflects both an increase in numbers of this peripheral species as well as a greater survey effort. Several new colonies have begun, including those at Blackfoot Reservoir, Bear Lake NWR, Oxford Slough WPA, and Camas NWR. However, these herons have apparently failed to continue nesting at Minidoka NWR, despite the fact that the colony site is well protected. This could be the result of a lack of space on the crowded Bird Island, but in any event indicates that Cattle Egret numbers can be characterized as either steady or showing a slow increase.

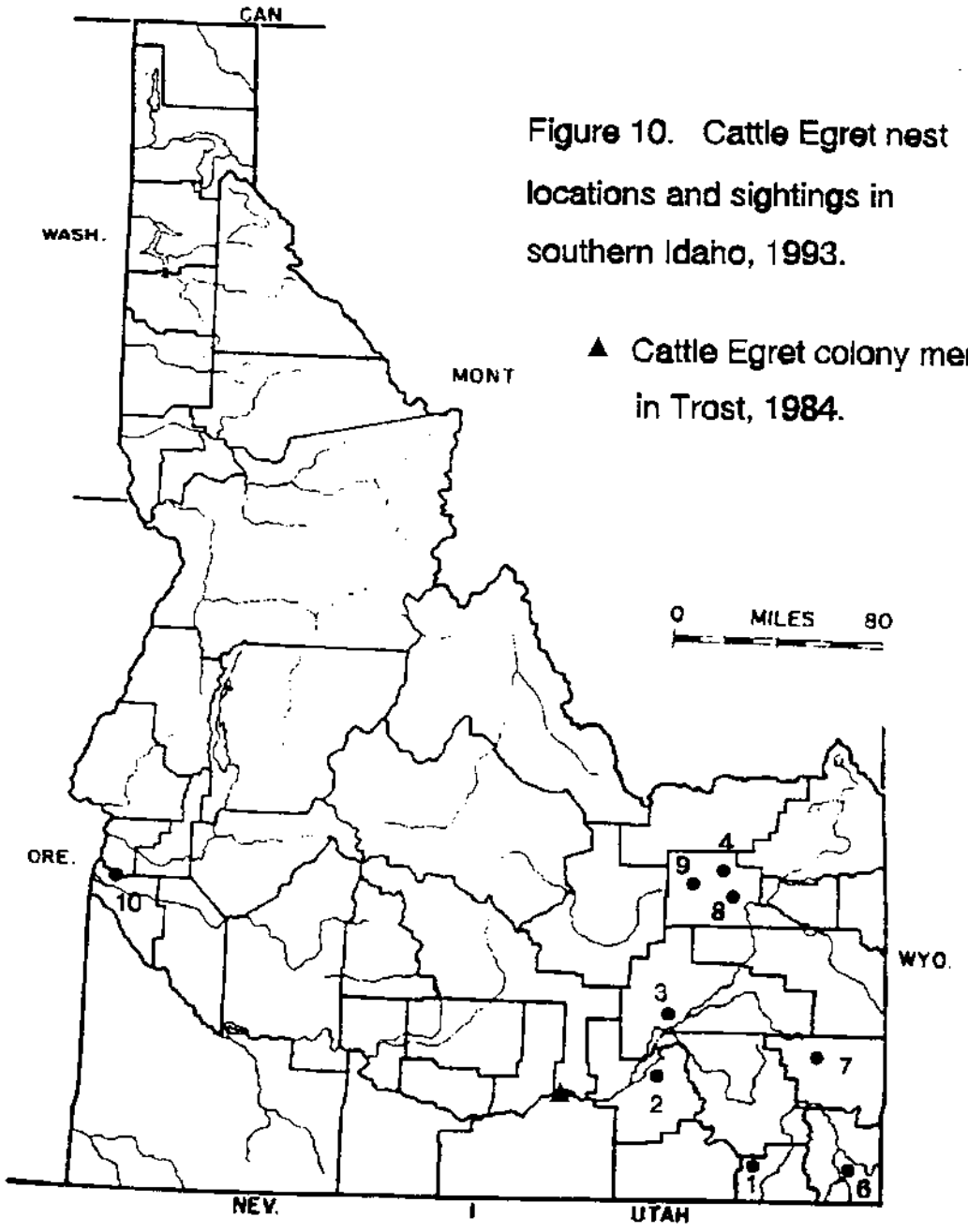


Figure 10. Cattle Egret nest locations and sightings in southern Idaho, 1993.

▲ Cattle Egret colony mentioned in Trost, 1984.

**Table 10. Nesting Locations and Sightings of Cattle Egrets in Idaho, 1993.**

| Map # | Location | Lat-Long. (TRS) | # Nests | # Birds | Date | Comments | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Oxford Slough WPA | 42.15-112.02 (T13S,R38E,S35) | - | 7 | 6-5 | Foraging in field on w. side. | This Study |
| 1 | " " " " " | | 5-6 | 8 | 6-23 | Flushed off nests in Ibis colony, young 1/2 grown. | " " |
| 2 | American Falls Res. | 42.48-112.40 (T5S,R33E,S21) | - | 1 | 5-26 | Near freeway, s. of reservoir. | " " |
| 3 | " " " | 42.59-112.36 (T5S,R33E,S36) | - | 1 | 6-15 | One over McTucker Springs to Bottoms. | " " |
| 3 | " " " " " | | - | 1 | 7-2 | One over lake to Bottoms. | " " |
| 3 | " " " " " | | 2-4 | 1 | 7-11 | One over near McTucker Springs, small colony near Spring Creek. | " " |
| 4 | Camas NWR | 43.54-112.16 (T7N,R36E,S30) | 16 | 16 | 6-29 | In colony by Ray's Lake, counted by airboat. | G. Deutcher |
| 4 | " " | " " | - | 1 | 7-5 | Flushed near colony off Camas Creek at Ray's Lake. | This Study |
| 4 | " " | " " | - | 2 | 7-8 | I flush two birds off nests. | " " |
| 6 | Bear Lake NWR | 42.09-111.19 (T15S,R44E,S34) | 5-10 | 30 | 7-8 | In colony with Ibis, 10 young produced. | R. Sjostrom |
| 7 | Blackfoot Res. | 42.48-111.38 (T6S,R41E,S13) | 3+ | 6 | 6-19 | First time seen on Gull Is. | L. Hlavaty |
| 8 | Market lake WMA | 43.47-112.10 (T5N,R37E,S6) | 1-2 | - | 6-10 | Present on main marsh | D. Kemner |
| 9 | Mud Lake WMA | 43.53-112.23 (T7N,R34E,S34) | 1-2 | - | 6-10 | Present in spring by tower. | D. Kemner |
| 10 | Deer Flat NWR, Lake Lowell | 43.40-116.45 (T3N,R3W,S33) | - | 14 | 9-10 | A flock was near Lake Lowell much of September. | J. Gatchett |
| - | Deer Flat NWR, Snake River | 42.12-117.05 (T7N,R5W,S22) | - | <10 | 5-26 | Present but not known to breed. | W. Stanley |

**Total Range in Cattle Egret Nests: 33-43**

**WHITE-FACED IBIS**
*Plegadis chihi*
**STATUS:** Federal Category 2 species (listing as threatened or endangered may be appropriate but conclusive data not currently available). Idaho Conservation Data Center rank is G5/S2 (widespread, abundant, and secure globally; imperiled in Idaho). Listed by the federal Bureau of Land management as a Sensitive Species.

*Distribution and Movements*
In the West, the White-faced Ibis breeds locally in northeastern California, southeastern Oregon, northern Nevada and northern Utah, Wyoming and western Montana, and southern Idaho. In Idaho, the northern limit of breeding is at the northern boundary of the Snake River Plain. This ibis is resident over much of its range, but northern populations, including those in the West, winter in southern California and along the western coast of Mexico. White-faced Ibis return north in late March or early April, and depart for their wintering grounds in early September.

In the 1970's, Great Basin populations of White-faced Ibis were greatly reduced, apparently due to the effects of pesticide contamination encountered while wintering in Mexico. Nesting success had greatly increased, however, by the early 1980's (Ryser 1985).

*Habitat and Nesting*
White-faced Ibis feed along the shores of ponds and streams, in agricultural areas, and at the receding edges of irrigation reservoirs (Taylor and Trost 1989). In eastern Idaho, the extensive use of flood irrigation has increased foraging habitat for the ibis (Trost 1989); ibises generally prefer to forage in fields that are irrigated and relatively close to the colony (Bray and Klebenow 1988). However, White-faced Ibis are capable of foraging at rich food sources as much as 10-20 miles (16-32km) from the nesting area, and long flight lines of these birds can be seen moving to and from the feeding areas. These birds feed by probing for insects, leeches, worms, molluscs, crustaceans (especially crayfish), frogs and fishes.

Nesting areas are at traditional sites, and are located in areas of marsh vegetation such as tule or cattail swamp, preferably near recently mown or flooded fields. Nests are generally at ground level, but may be found in bushes or small trees growing by the water. Ground nests are made of dry cattail stalks or similar material, while tree nests are made of sticks and twigs, along with some green vegetation. White-faced Ibis often nest in colonies associated with nests of Snowy Egrets, Black-crowned Night Herons, and Franklin's Gulls. Clutch size ranges from 2-7 eggs, with 3-4 being the most common size.

*Survey Results*
The number of known White-faced Ibis colonies has increased from five to seven since the 1984 survey. The discovery of the colony

at Duck Valley Indian Reservation added considerably to the increase in known nests. Our count of this colony was quite accurate since the nests could simply be counted from a nearby hill above Highway 51. Despite our confidence in the nest numbers, we note that on June 28th an evening count recorded at least 2,300 ibis entering and leaving the colony. This huge number may reflect non-breeders that roost in the colony, or new groups of ibis may have been moving in to nest. There is apparently considerable inter-colony movement by this ibis, so their numbers in any season are dynamic (USFWS 1985).

Ibis are a very difficult species to accurately census. We attempted an aerial count, but even when we knew the exact location of the colony, we missed many nests. Ground counts are hampered by deep water and thick vegetation. Taking a canoe through a colony yields an idea of the colony area, but only a fraction of the nests can be counted when the colony includes as many as 700-800 nests. Flight rates remain a good way to assess the numbers of ibis in a colony if the inflationary effect of non-breeders is taken into account. Evening or dawn are the best times for most counts, but the observer must be aware of the foraging directions taken by the ibis, since they are highly social in their feeding flights. Several times during this survey our independent counts of a single colony were off by more than an order of magnitude, simply because one observer was not in view of the flight path taken by ibis that day.

Our general impression is that White-faced Ibis continue to increase in southern Idaho. Although there is apparently inter-colony movement, we feel that most of the increase is from local recruitment. Some colonies have dwindled, such as the one at American Falls Reservoir, and this is likely due to changes in local agricultural practices. The use of flood irrigation in the upper Snake River Plain is probably the single most important factor leading to the increase in ibis in Idaho.

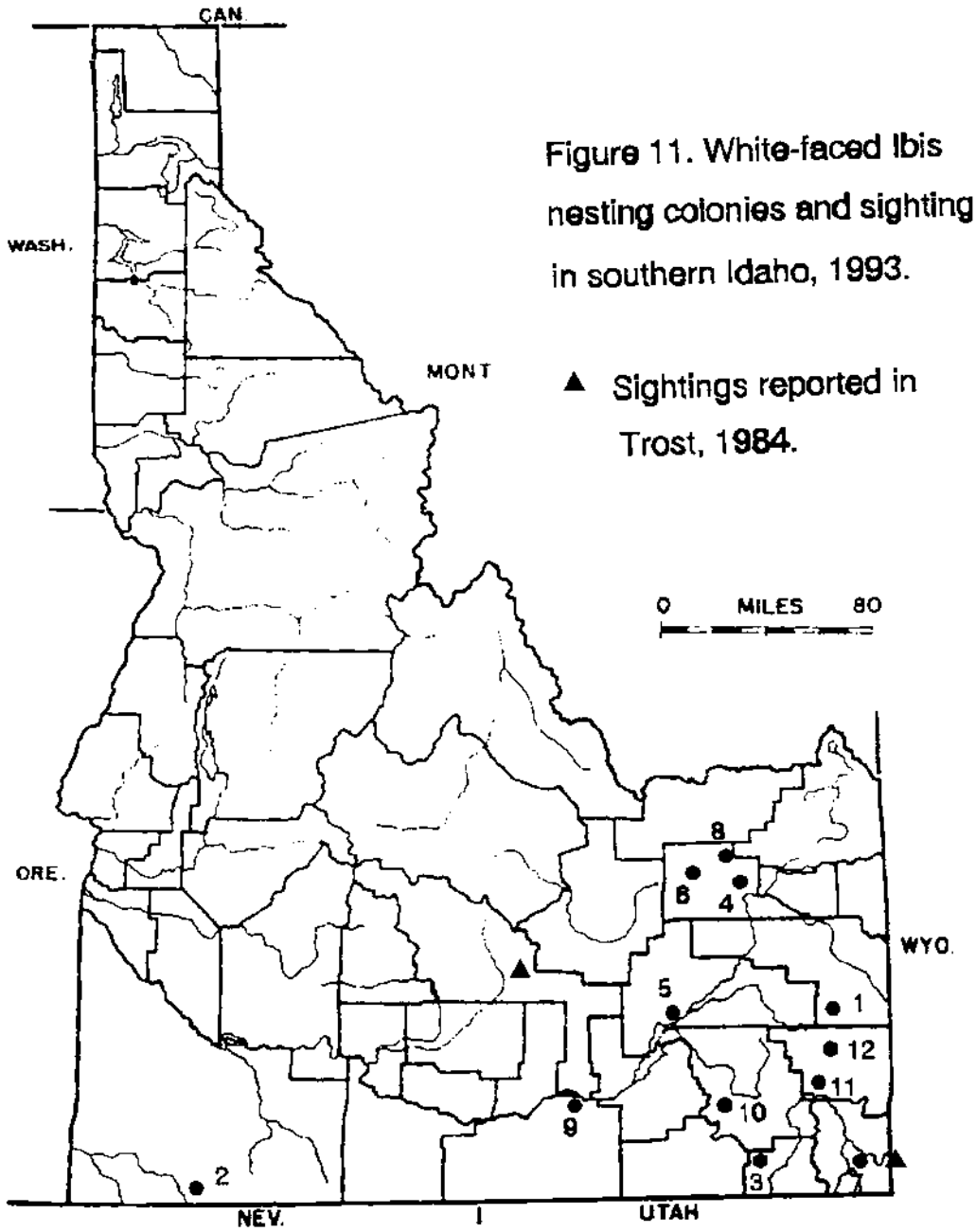


Figure 11. White-faced Ibis nesting colonies and sightings in southern Idaho, 1993.

▲ Sightings reported in Trost, 1984.

**Table 11. Nesting Locations and Sightings of White-faced Ibis in Idaho, 1993.**

| Map # | Location | Lat-Long. (TRS) | # Nests | # Birds | Date | Comments | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Gray's Lake NWR | 43.01-111.27 (T3S-R43E,S4) | - | 29 | 5-26 | Flushed off nests by airboat, 9 nests seen, 7 w/4 & 2 w/2 eggs. | This Study |
| 1 | " " " " " | | - | 3 | 6-26 | Foraging on n. side by Mann Rd. | " " |
| 1 | " " " " " | | 110-120 | 235 | 6-26 | Counted near dusk from Hwy 34, flight back to nests (2015-2125). | " " |
| 2 | Duck Valley Indian Reservation | 41.59-116.00 (T16S,R2E,S29) | 720-730 | 750+ | 5-28 | Incubating birds on nests by Hwy 51, about 2 miles n. of Res. Headquarters. A huge colony, with Snowy, & Great Egrets, plus night-herons. Called "Donabahba Yogee" on map. | " " |
| 2 | " " " " " | | - | 938 | 6-28 | Flight rates to the south were 654-776/hr, with a total of 849 entering & 89 seen leaving the colony by Hwy 51. | " " |
| 2 | " " " " " | | - | 1382 | 6-28 | Total count of ibis from the north was 1,127 in and 255 out, which should be added to the other count = 2,320 in this colony! | " " |
| 3 | Oxford Slough WPA | 42.15-112.02 (T13S,R38E,S35) | - | 515+ | 6-5 | Flight rates were taken from two locations of Ibis from the north. The rates were 406/hr and 515/hr, with some overlap. There were also 50+ feeding on the south side, so they are going off in all directions. Many were in pairs, thus young are probably in the nests. | " " |
| 3 | " " " " " | | - | 400+ | 6-17 | Flight rate over the main marsh, watching from the west, was 325/hr. There were many additional birds feeding to the south east in mown fields. | " " |
| 3 | " " " " " | | - | 3,608 | 6-22 | Two dusk counts from the north end yielded 1149/hr and 2,459/hr, with most coming in from the south. A total of at least 3,608 entered the colony. | " " |

**Table 11, cont. Nesting Locations and Sightings of White-faced Ibis in Idaho, 1993.**

| Map # | Location | Lat-Long. (TRS) | # Nests | # Birds | Date | Comments | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | Oxford Slough WPA | 42.15-112.02 (T13S,R38E,S35) | 900-1200 | 250+ | 6-23 | By canoe over 250 Ibis were flushed off nests. A flight rate in the colony at 1640 yielded 784/hr. The mean number of young in six nests was 2.5. This is a huge colony! | This Study |
| 4 | Market Lake WMA | 43.47-112.10 (T5N,R37E,S6) | - | 898+ | 6-7 | Flight rates were taken from two locations between 0950-1050, with rates of 898/hr & 337/hr. This was a rainy day, with arrivals about equal departures: 434 in & 464 out, with most birds heading to or from the east. | " " |
| 4 | " " " " " | | - | 462 | 6-11 | Flights were about even coming and going from the main marsh, with the total of 462/hr, (0945-1045). | " " |
| 4 | " " " " " | | - | 3200+ | 6-24 | A dusk count from 1956-2056 yielded 1492/hr and another from 2056-2126 yielded 1246/hr. Total into the colony was 2,738, and out = 524. | " " |
| 4 | " " " " " | | 500-1000 | 226+ | 6-24 | A 0.5 mile transect was taken through the marsh with at least 50 possible nests spotted. Since this strip was no more than 10% of the colony, it is estimated that a minimum of 500 nests are here. A Biologist, Mark Fleming, said he estimated about 2,000 adults nest in this colony. | " " |
| 4 | " " " " " | | - | 244+ | 7-3 | The young are flying now and creched. A flight rate at 1512 yielded 976/hr. | " " |
| 5 | American Falls Res. | 42.59-112.16 (T5S,R33E,S36) | - | 4 | 6-8 | A flight rate from McTucker Springs area at 0930 yielded only 4/hr. | " " |
| 5 | " " " " " | | - | 12 | 6-9 | Seen flying down the bluffs toward ths Bottoms. | " " |
| 5 | " " " " " | | - | 44 | 6-11 | McTucker Springs area = 44/hr. | " " |

**Table 11, cont. Nesting Locations and Sightings of White-faced Ibis in Idaho, 1993.**

| Map # | Location | Lat-Long. (TRS) | # Nests | # Birds | Date | Comments | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | American Falls Res. | 42.59-112.16 (T5S,R33E,S36) | - | 95 | 6-15 | Between 1845-1945 the flight rate was 95/hr in the McTucker Springs area, with 70 in & 25 out. | This Study |
| 5 | " " " " " | | - | 30 | 6-17 | These Ibis flew over as I was paddling a canoe off the Bottoms. | " " |
| 5 | " " " " " | | - | 34 | 7-2 | Small groups were coming & going in the McTucker Springs area. | " " |
| 5 | " " " " " | | 40-60 | 112 | 7-11 | Counted foraging around the north edge of the reservoir. | " " |
| 5 | " " " " " | | - | 5 | 7-14 | Over Siphon Road on the s.e. side of the reservoir. | " " |
| 5 | " " " " " | | - | 51 | 7-19 | Between 0800-1000 these birds were seen making feeding flights into & from the Bottoms, with a mean flock size of 4.2 birds. | " " |
| 6 | Mud Lake WMA | 43.53-112.25 (T7N,R37E,S34) | - | 50 | 6-11 | From the north dike road the flight rate was 50/hr (1015-1115). | " " |
| 6 | " " " " " | | - | 594 | 6-14 | Flight rate from the s. side was 594/hr, and from a canoe in the mid-marsh it was 526/hr. About 307 Ibis left the marsh to the s.e. and 287 returned between 1110-1240. | " " |
| 6 | " " " " " | | - | 361 | 6-15 | This is from the south dike again, which misses those heading n.e., but it was a flight rate of 361/hr. | " " |
| 6 | " " " " " | | - | 758 | 6-25 | A dusk count from west of the tower area on the n. shore revealed most of the Ibis coming in from the west. Another count at 2015-2125 from the tower area yielded 173 coming in and 5 going out. | " " |
| 6 | " " " " " | | - | 900+ | 7-9 | In the west marsh there are creching young Ibis, with many running across the rushes. Flight rates were taken at the same time, with 897/hr. (1104-1204). | " " |

**Table 11, cont. Nesting Locations and Sightings of White-faced Ibis in Idaho, 1993.**

| Map # | Location | Lat-Long. (TRS) | # Nests | # Birds | Date | Comments | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | Mud Lake WMA | 43.53-112.25 (T7N,R37E,S34) | 400-800 | 400 | 7-21 | At least 400 were feeding in one plowed field s.e. of the lake, and flocks of 35-50 were flying back toward the colony. | This Study |
| 7 | Bear Lake NWR | 42.11-111.19 (T14S,R44E,S34) | 600 | 1700 | 7-8 | A huge colony on Mud Lake, about 1500 young being produced. | R. Sjostrom |
| 7 | " " " | " " | - | 61 | 6-19 | Many Ibis seem to be moving n. off the refuge to feed in fields. | This Study |
| 7 | " " " | " " | - | 251 | 6-21 | Three people counted at dusk to the n. & w. of the refuge. One flight rate was 146/hr, with 46 heading out at almost dark. | " " |
| 7 | " " " | " " | - | 326 | 7-10 | An observation on the east side about 0.5 miles s. of Dingle between 1050-1150 yielded a flight rate of 261/hr, with even numbers coming and going, and 65 Ibis in the nearby fields feeding. | " " |
| 8 | Camas NWR | 43.54-112.16 (T7N,R36E,S18) | - | 275 | 6-16 | Adults flushed off new nests, some with 4 eggs, others w/2, only 20% of the nests had eggs. | G. Deutcher |
| 8 | " " | " " | - | 15 | 6-30 | A separate small colony is on Toomey Pond. | " " |
| 8 | " " | " " S17 | - | 256 | 6-29 | Two flight rates at the colony in the Center Marsh between 1840 -1915 yielded 136/hr & 120/hr coming & going. Several Ibis were carrying nest material, others were going out to forage singly. | This Study |
| 8 | " " | " " S18 | 10-15 | 250 | 7-5 | About 20 Ibis flew into Toomey Pond during a canoe visit. One nest had 3 eggs. A foraging group of 250 were near Ray's Lake. | " " |

**Table 11, cont. Nesting Locations and Sightings of White-faced Ibis in Idaho, 1993.**

| Map # | Location | Lat-Long. (TRS) | # Nests | # Birds | Date | Comments | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | Camas NWR | 43.54-112.16 (T7N,R36E,S17) | 100-125 | 160+ | 7-8 | I canoed into the Center Marsh and found 13 nests w/ a mean of 3.0 eggs. Several were still empty and 6 had newly hatched young. Others had chicks nearly full grown. | This Study |
| 8 | " " | " " S17 | - | 15 | 8-4 | Young are about ready to fledge on Toomey Pond, with 15 Ibis about. | " " |
| 9 | Minidoka NWR | 42.40-113.20 (T9S,R26E,S26) | - | 50 | 7-5 | A flock of 50 flew down river at Coldwateer Creek, and out of sight to the west. | " " |
| 10 | Hawkins Reservoir | 42.35-112.25 (T11S,R36E,S35) | - | 9 | 6-7 | Feeding in a field near the pond. | " " |
| 11 | Chester Hill Res. | 42.43-111.45 (T8S,R41E,S25) | - | 8 | 8-3 | Flying in from n., foraging. | " " |
| 12 | Blackfoot Res. | 42.56-111.37 (T6S,R41E,S11) | - | 20+ | 6-19 | Seen nearby - foraging group? | L. Hlavaty |

**Total Range of Ibis Nests = 3,280-4,650**

**CALIFORNIA GULL**
*Larus californicus*
**STATUS:** No current listing

*Distribution and Movements*
The California Gull breeds in the interior of North America from Canada south into Montana, northwest Utah, northeast Nevada, south-central Oregon, and southern Washington. Populations in the West have increased in this century, possibly due to increased food resources in the form of garbage dumps and irrigated fields, as well as reduced human pressure from shooting and egg collecting (Conover 1983, Conover et al. 1979). Increased use of covered landfills may therefore have an effect on this species. In Idaho, breeding is restricted to the Snake River Plain, particularly the eastern portion. California Gulls winter along the Pacific coast, parts of California and along the southern portion of the Colorado River, at the Great Salt Lake, and in the Gulf of Mexico. Idaho birds follow the Snake River downstream to the ocean during fall migration (Trost 1985).

*Habitat and Nesting*
The California Gull breeds on islands in freshwater or alkaline lakes, as well as in marshes. Nests are 14-18 inches (35-45cm) across, and are constructed on bare ground from rubbish, dead weeds, straw, and grass. Clutch sizes vary from 1-5 eggs; 2-3 eggs is the most common size.

In open areas of the West, these gulls feed in fields, where they prey on crickets, grasshoppers, cutworms, and mice. They also eat dead fish and garbage, and may eat the eggs of other bird species, including the American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, and various waterfowl. When feeding on water, California Gulls usually remain on the surface, but may plunge-dive after fish.

*Survey Results*
Six of the seven colonies of California Gull reported in the 1984 survey (Trost 1985) are still active; only the colony at Mud Lake WMA is no longer active. We added the large colony on Smith Island of Deer Flat NWR, which contains between 7,000 and 7,500 nests (thanks to Wayne Stanley and Andy Ogden). There appears to be a three-fold increase in numbers since 1984. This increase is probably real, and not simply an artifact of increased survey effort, because it was obvious that several of the colonies had expanded to cover nearly an entire island where in 1984 they had covered only half. Now that many communities are covering their garbage disposal areas, it will be interesting to see if gull numbers remain high.

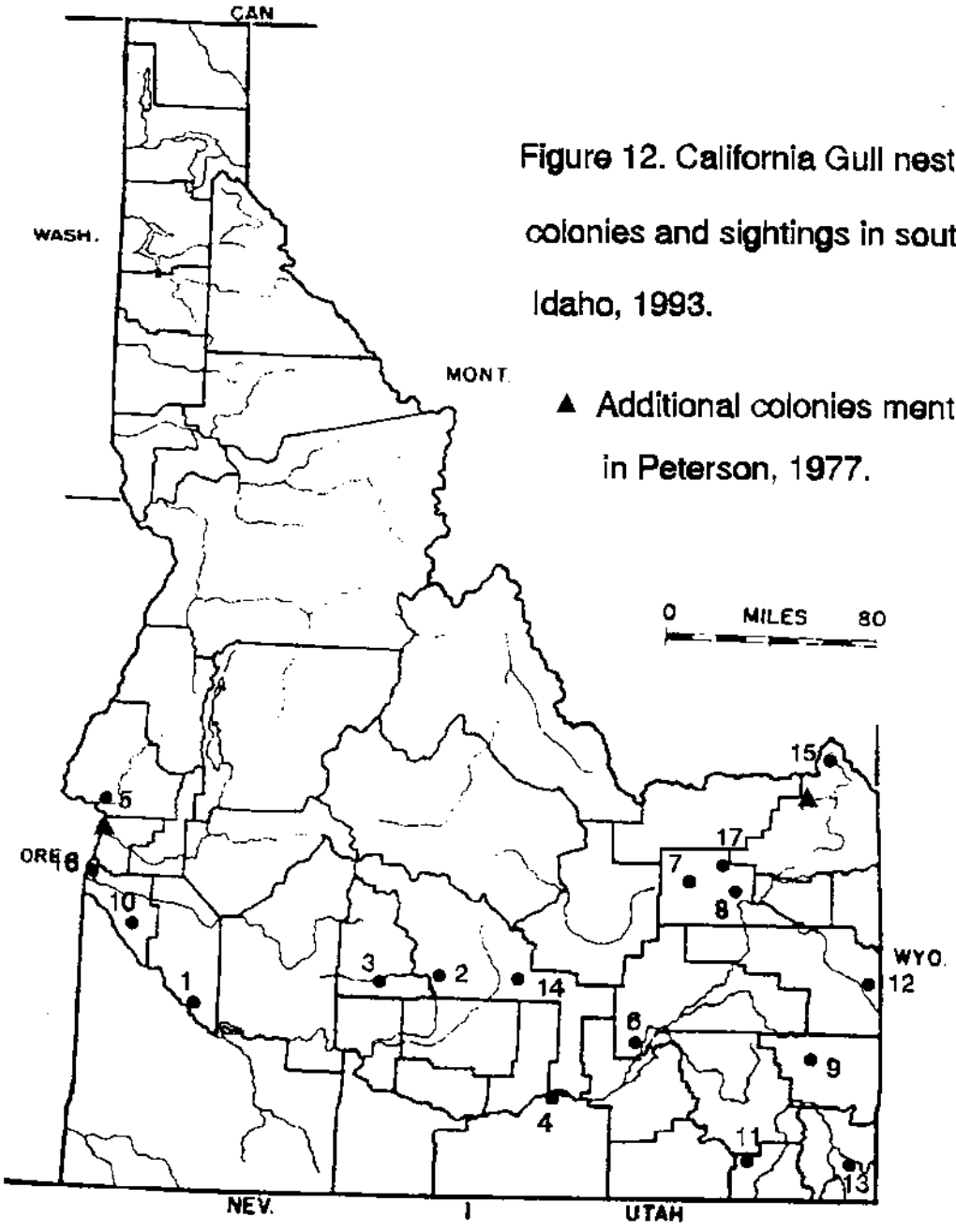


Figure 12. California Gull nesting colonies and sightings in southern Idaho, 1993.

▲ Additional colonies mentioned in Peterson, 1977.

**Table 12. Nesting Locations and Sightings of California Gulls in Idaho, 1993.**

| Map # | Location | Lat-Long. (TRS) | # Nests | # Birds | Date | Comments | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Ted Trueblood WMA | 43.00-116.07 (T5S,R3E,S9) | - | 100 | 5-28 | Colony is in a WMA and will probably be harrassed by the land managers. | J. Doremus |
| 1 | " " " | " " | 120-200 | 250+ | 6-10 | Three 5x5 m plots set out, with 9, 12, & 13 nests in them. There were 20 chicks and 3 eggs in the 3 plots combined. The colony is on 3 islands. | This Study |
| 2 | Magic Reservoir | 43.15-114.22 (T2S,R17E,S13) | 1500-2500 | 3,000+ | 6-13 | The colony is on the west side, about a mile from the dam. It is on a peninsula with low water this year, and vulnerable to coyote & human disturbance. | " " |
| 3 | Mormon Reservoir | 43.15-114.50 (T2S,R14E,S19) | 7500-8500 | 10,000 | 6-13 | The colony is on an island in the s.w. arm, and occupies about half the island. | " " |
| 4 | Minidoka NWR | 42.40-113.20 (T9S,R26E,S5) | 450-500 | 255+ | 6-22 | There are 25 gulls on the small island to the west and 230 on Gull Island. There seems to be space limitations for the gulls. | " " |
| 4 | " " | " " | - | 50+ | 7-5 | The young are flying now, with many exploring the lake nearby. | " " |
| 5 | Deer Flat NWR, Snake River | 44.12-117.05 (T7N,R5W,S22) | - | 10000+ | 5-26 | Gulls are on Smith Island in the Snake River Sector. | W. Stanley |
| 5 | " " " | " " | 7000-7500 | 4000+ | 6-30 | About 3000 juveniles were running around. Nest densities in 5x5 m plots were 11, 9, 7, 9, 4, & 11 (mean = 8.5/plot). From an aerial photo with a 1:6000 scale we estimate the colony size about 21,600 square meters, which means about 864 5x5 m plots. Thus there are 7,344 nests. | This Study |
| 6 | American Falls Res. | 42.55-112.46 (T5S,R31E,S36) | - | 9 | 6-8 | McTucker Springs area, one hour count of gulls. | " " |

**Table 12, cont. Nesting Locations and Sightings of California Gulls in Idaho, 1993.**

| Map # | Location | Lat-Long. (TRS) | # Nests | # Birds | Date | Comments | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | American Falls Res. | 42.55-112.46 (T5S,R31E,S36) | - | 10 | 7-2 | At the edge of the Bottoms there were several gulls near the cormorant nests. | This Study |
| 6 | " " " " " | | 8000-9000 | 200+ | 7-14 | The gulls have mostly left the colony but we counted nest depressions in 5 fx5 m plots, with a mean of 7.2/plot. It is estimated that there are 1200 such plots in the gull nesting area, thus about 8640 nests. | " " |
| 7 | Mud Lake WMA | 43.53-112.23 (T7N,R34E,S34) | - | 1 | 6-12 | One gull seen along the n. side. | " " |
| 7 | " " " | " " | - | 5 | 6-25 | Near the cormorant colony on the n. side, foraging. | " " |
| 7 | " " " | " " | - | 6 | 7-21 | Sitting on the marsh. | " " |
| 8 | Market Lake WMA | 43.47-112.10 (T5N,R37E,S6) | - | 7 | 6-7 | Over the east marsh, foraging. | " " |
| 8 | " " " | " " | - | 2 | 6-11 | Near the Ibis colony, foraging. | " " |
| 8 | " " " | " " | - | 50 | 7-3 | Sitting on a spoil island, no sign of juveniles. | " " |
| 9 | Blackfoot Res. | 42.48-111.38 (T6S,R41E,S13) | - | 2000+ | 6-19 | There are hundreds of gulls nesting on Gull Island. | L. Hlavaty |
| 9 | " " | " " | 7000-8000 | 650+ | 7-4 | The colony has expanded to take up most of Gull Island now. | This Study |
| 10 | Deer Flat NWR, Lake Lowell | 43.40-116.45 (T3N,R3W,S33) | - | 170 | 6-3 | There are 2-3000 gulls using the refuge on Lake Lowell all summer, but apparently not nesting. | W. Stanley |
| 11 | Oxford Slough WPA | 42.15-112.02 (T13S,R38E,S35) | - | 1 | 6-5 | One bird on s. Twin Lakes. | This Study |
| 11 | " " " | " " | - | 50 | 6-22 | Foraging near the Ibis colony. | " " |
| 12 | Palisades Res. | 43.08-111.03 (T3S,R46E,S36) | - | 65 | 6-18 | Roosting on the new dikes at the s. end of the lake. | " " |
| 13 | Bear Lake WMA | 42.11-111.19 (T14S,R44E,S34) | 10 | 30 | 7-8 | There is a small colony on w. Rainbow Is., w/ about 15 young produced. | R. Sjostrom |
| 13 | " " " | " " | - | 2 | 6-19 | Only 2 could be identified. | This Study |

**Table 12, cont. Nesting Locations and Sightings of California Gulls in Idaho, 1993.**

| Map # | Location | Lat-Long. (TRS) | # Nests | # Birds | Date | Comments | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14 | Carey Marsh WMA | 43.20-113.55 (T1S,R21E,S14) | - | 25 | 6-9 | Resting on s.w.shore, not nesting | This Study |
| 15 | Henry's Lake | 44.45-111.20 (T16N,R43E,S31) | - | 18 | 7-17 | Resting by the boat access on the s. shore, not nesting. | " " |
| 16 | Fort Boise WMA | 43.40-117.01 (T6N,R5W,S36) | - | 2 | 5-30 | Flying overhead, no nesting. | " " |
| 17 | Camas NWR | 43.54-112.16 (T7N,R36E,S18) | - | present | 6-16 | Not known to nest here. | G. Deutcher |
| - | Kootenai NWR | 48.42-116.10 (T62N,R2E,S13) | - | present | 6-29 | Not known to nest here. | J. Reynolds |

**Total range of California Gull Nests = 24,155-36,210**

**RING-BILLED GULL**
*Larus delawarensis*
**STATUS:** No current listing

*Distribution and Movements*
In the West, the Ring-billed Gull breeds from Canada south into Montana and Wyoming, as well as in portions of eastern Oregon and eastern Washington and in the Snake River Plain area of Idaho. Populations in the West have increased in this century, possibly due to increased foraging areas in the form of irrigated fields, as well as reduced human pressure from shooting and egg collecting (Conover 1983, Conover et al. 1979). Ring-billed Gulls winter along the Pacific coast and parts of interior California, through southern Arizona and New Mexico, and southward into Mexico. Some birds also overwinter in Idaho. Wintering habitat is generally along large lakes and rivers.

*Habitat and Nesting*
Ring-billed Gulls feed in diverse habitats, preying on worms, grubs, and insects from freshly plowed fields, grasshoppers caught in flight, and small rodents captured from fields. They take fishes from the shallow edges of large bodies of water, and also eat the eggs of cormorants and other species.

These gulls nest in colonies on islands or along the shore of freshwater lakes. Nesting is often in association with terns, cormorants, and other gulls; their tightly-packed colonies are often surrounded by the more widely spaced California Gulls. Clutch sizes range from 1-7 eggs, but 2-4 eggs is the most common size.

*Survey Results*
Most of the traditional Ring-billed Gull colonies surveyed in 1984 remain active, but there seems to be a slight downward trend in numbers of nests. The largest decrease in numbers was at Magic Reservoir, which apparently did not fill completely after the drought. This left the traditional colony along the northwest shore connected to the mainland, making both the California and Ring-billed Gull colonies vulnerable to predation and to human disturbance. Otherwise, colonies of Ring-billed gulls appear to have remained largely stable since the 1984 survey.

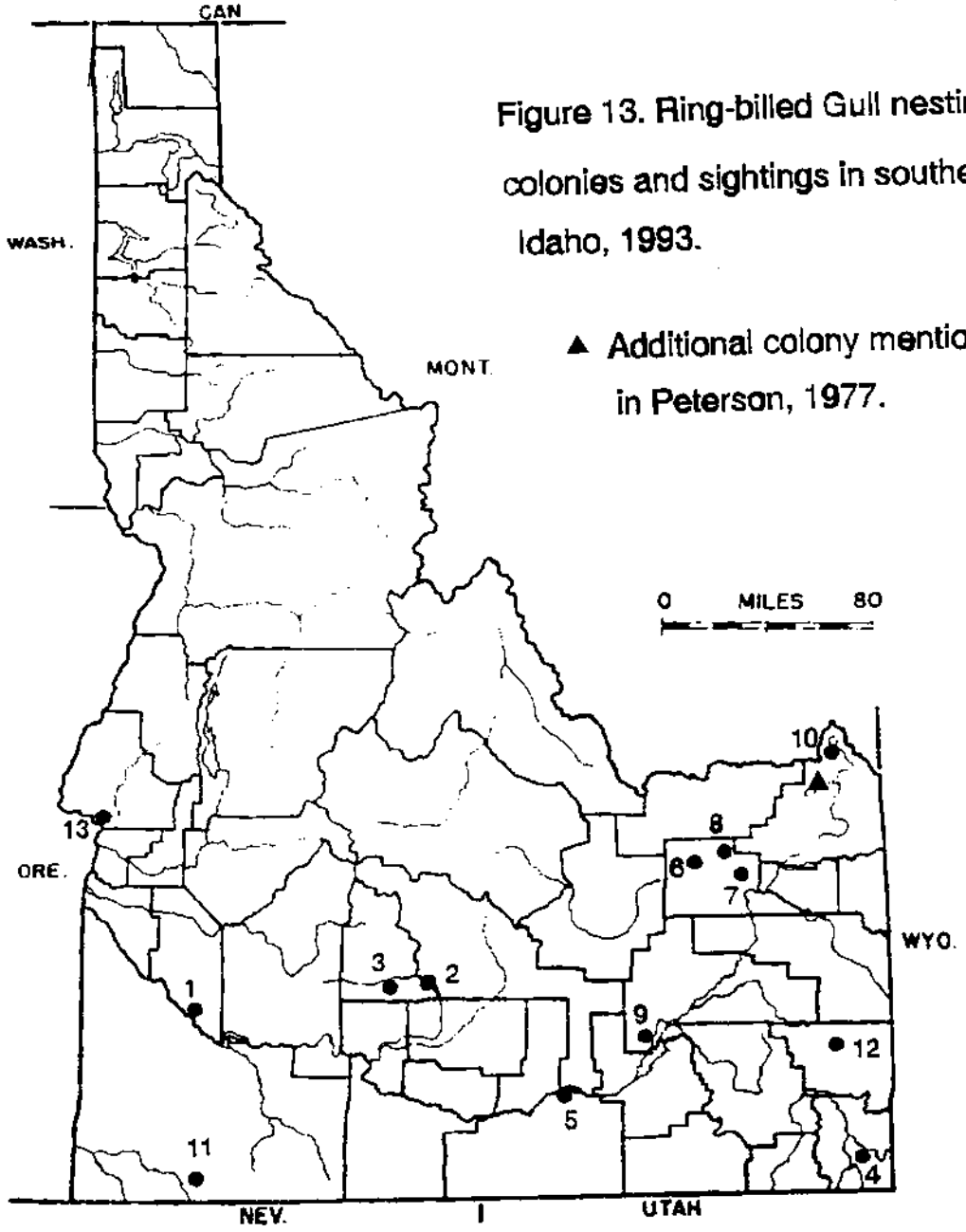


Figure 13. Ring-billed Gull nesting colonies and sightings in southern Idaho, 1993.

▲ Additional colony mentioned in Peterson, 1977.

**Table 13. Nesting Locations and Sightings of Ring-billed Gulls in Idaho, 1993.**

| Map # | Location | Lat-Long. (TRS) | # Nests | # Birds | Date | Comments | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Ted Trueblood WMA | 43.00-116.07 (T5S,R3E,S9) | 375-425 | 900 | 5-28 | Gulls nesting in WMA, subject to harrassment by managers. | J. Doremus |
| 1 | " " " | " " | - | - | 6-10 | Colony on 3 islands, on Dorsey Butte topo. | This Study |
| 2 | Magic Reservoir | 43.15-114.22 (T2S,R17E,S36) | 200-250 | 345 | 6-13 | The colony is on a peninsula, with Ring-bills at the neck, Calif. gulls further out. Nest density 25.5 nests per 5x5 m plot, 9 plots. | " " |
| 3 | Mormon Reservoir | 43.15-114.50 (T2S,R14E,S29) | 3500-3800 | 300+ | 6-13 | Colony at the w. tip of the island with Calif. gulls in center. Nest density 21 nests/5x5 m plot, about 175 plots. | " " |
| 4 | Bear Lake NWR | 42.11-111.19 (T14S,R44E,S34) | - | 4 | 6-21 | Four Ring-bills were near the ibis colony, not recorded here by R. Sjostrom. | " " |
| 5 | Minidoka NWR | 42.40-113.20 (T9S,R26E,S5) | ? | 1 | 6-22 | An adult was calling in a territorial fashion from the edge of Gull Island. They may well nest here now. | " " |
| 6 | Mud Lake WMA | 43.53-112.23 (T7N,R34E,S34) | - | 3 | 6-25 | Watching from the tower near the cormorant colony. Gulls foraging here. | " " |
| 6 | " " " | " " | - | 3 | 7-21 | Sitting on the exposed marsh. | " " |
| 7 | Market Lake WMA | 43.47-112.10 (T5N,R37E,S6) | 20-25 | 40 | 7-3 | Cicks are running together, on n. end of main marsh, with F. Gulls & Ibis. | " " |
| 8 | Camas NWR | 43.54-112.16 (T7N,R36E,S17) | - | 9 | 7-5 | Sitting on Sandhole Lake, not nesting. | " " |
| 9 | American Falls Res. | 42.55-112.46 (T5S,R31E,S36) | 2000-2500 | 75 | 6-8 | Nesting in denser vegitation on n. side 21.5 nests per 5x5 m plot, about 100 in colony area. | " " |
| 10 | Henry's Lake | 44.45-111.20 (T16N,R21E,S31) | - | 35+ | 7-17 | Resting and feeding, no nests. | " " |
| 11 | Duck Valley Indian Reservation | 41.59-116.00 (T16S,R2E,S11) | - | 30 | 5-28 | Sub-adult gulls resting on Mountain View Reservoir. | " " |
| 12 | Deer Flat NWR, Snake River | 44.12-117.05 (T7N,R5W,S22) | ? | - | 5-26 | On Smith Island, no Ring-bills seen, may nest elsewhere nearby. | W. Stanley |

**Table 13. Nesting Locations and Sightings of Ring-billed Gulls in Idaho, 1993.**

| Map # | Location | Lat-Long. (TRS) | # Nests | # Birds | Date | Comments | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| - | Deer Flat NWR, Lake Lowell | 43.40-116.45 (T3N,R3W,S33) | - | 2-3000 | 5-26 | Present from April to October, but not known to breed. | W. Stanley |
| - | Kootenai NWR | 48.42-116.10 (T62N,R2E,S13) | - | - | 6-29 | Present on refuge, but not known to breed. | J. Reynolds |

**Total Range of Ring-billed Gull Nests = 6,095-7,000**

**FRANKLIN'S GULL**
*Larus pipixcan*
**STATUS:** No current listing

*Distribution and Movements*
In the West, Franklin's Gulls breed from Canada south into Montana, and locally in Oregon, Nevada, Utah, and Idaho, where they are found on a portion of the Snake River Plain in the southeast part of the state. They winter along the Pacific coast from Guatemala southward in Central and South America.

*Habitat and Nesting*
Franklin's gulls feed in fields, where they prey on grasshoppers, crickets, cutworms, and grubs. They catch dragonflies and other insects in flight, and hover over sloughs and small ponds to take small fishes and aquatic insects.

Nesting takes place among marsh reeds. Nests can be either floating or attached to the marsh vegetation, and are constructed of dead marsh plants. Clutch sizes vary from 2-4 eggs, with three eggs the most common size. These gulls nest in colonies as large as 15,000-20,000 birds.

*Survey Results*
Franklin's Gull populations have increased during the interval from 1984 to 1993, although total nest numbers are lower (approximately 9,000 in 1993 vs. 17,000 in 1984). In this survey, we lowered estimated nest numbers at Gray's Lake NWR because we visited the colony and obtained an actual idea of the colony size. Also, the highest observed flight rate of 3,230 birds/hour on June 26 probably captured the evening feeding flight of a good portion of the breeding colony.

Fears expressed by Trost (1985) about the effect of local pesticide use on reproductive capacity of this species have been allayed. Many young apparently fledged from the colony at Gray's Lake. Similarly, the colonies at Mud Lake WMA and Oxford Slough WPA have expanded. Soon after the young fledge, their parents lead them on foraging flights, and on July 17 we found young hawking insects over Henry's Lake, which is at least 80 miles from the nearest colony.

We found this a very difficult species to census. Adults nest in inaccessible locations where an airboat is best used to measure the size of the colony. The next best method of estimating colony size is the use of a canoe. Colony measurements obtained by these methods, coupled with flight rates, gave us some confidence in our estimates of nest numbers. Nonetheless, flight rates can be deceiving unless the observer is underneath the foraging flight path of this highly social gull. At Market Lake WMA we obtained a flight rate of 567 birds/hour over the east side on June 7th, but on June 11th observed only one bird. Such large differences in flight rates reflect changes in social behavior.

To obtain an adequate measure of Franklin's Gull numbers, we recommend driving to different locations until finding an observing location where gulls can be seen leaving and entering the colony, and making counts from this point. An alternate strategy would be an aerial survey of the colonies early in the season during incubation. On this survey, we flew too late (July 7th), and as a result were unable to count nests, even when using a microscope to examine photographic slides of the colony. However, during incubation the light color of the adults should be apparent. Consequently we recommend late May or early June as the best time frame for aerial observations.

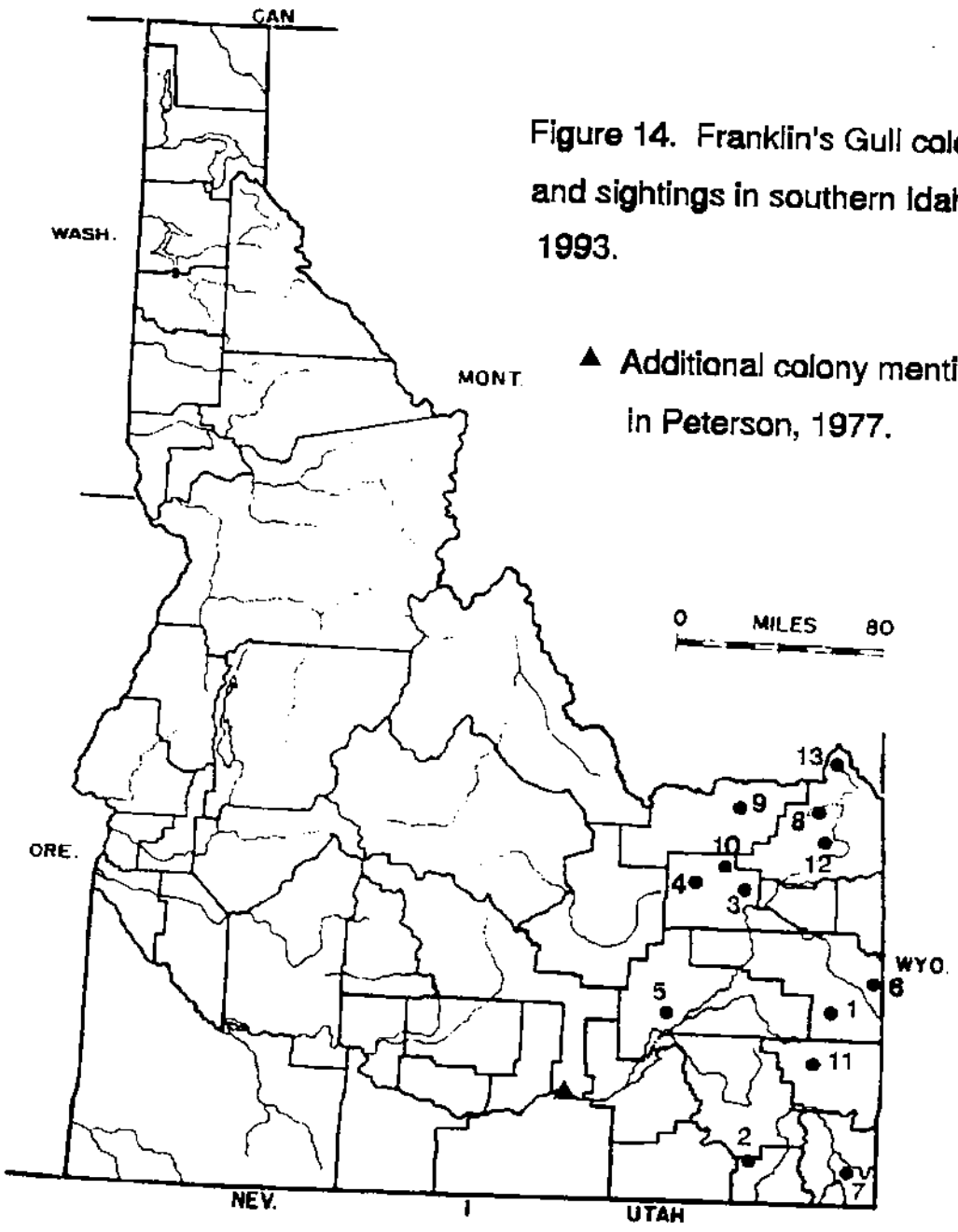


Figure 14. Franklin's Gull colonies and sightings in southern Idaho, 1993.

▲ Additional colony mentioned in Peterson, 1977.

**Table 14. Nesting Locations and Sightings of Franklin's Gulls in Idaho, 1993.**

| Map # | Location | Lat-Long. (TRS) | # Nests | # Birds | Date | Comments | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Gray's Lake NWR | 43.01-111.27 (T3S,R43E,S4) | 5000-6000 | 300+ | 5-26 | We went through the colony in an airboat, counting 91 nests Clutch sizes were: 60 w/3, 22 w/2, 9 w/1 egg (mean = 2.56/nest). S. Bouffard estimates 10,000 gulls nesting here. | This Study |
| 1 | " " " | " " | - | 3230 | 6-26 | A flight rate was taken from the w. side, between 2015-2115, yielding 3230/hr. Most heading away to the west. Between 1745-1805 only 25 gulls were counted at the n. end, by Mann Rd. also, between 2015-2125 only 15 gulls were seen Hwy 34 on s.e. part of refuge. | " " |
| 2 | Oxford Slough WPA | 42.15-112.02 (T13S,R36E,S35) | - | 150+ | 6-5 | These were feeding to the s. & e. of the refuge, many more were flying low over the marsh. A large colony. | " " |
| 2 | " " " | " " | 1500-2500 | 300+ | 6-23 | There are several thousand gulls nesting here, but it is difficult to count. Chicks are jumping off nests, so the Fledging size is 5 w/3, 3 w/2 chicks (mean = 2.62/nest). | " " |
| 3 | Market Lake WMA | 43.47-112.10 (T5N,R37E,S6) | - | 567 | 6-7 | Flight rates were taken at two places: there were 147/hr between 0950-1050 on the east side and 567/hr near the main marsh. | " " |
| 3 | " " " | " " | - | 1 | 6-11 | Only one seen on east side between 0945-1045. | " " |
| 3 | " " " | " " | 800-1200 | 214+ | 7-3 | About 100 constantly mobbing on a transect along dike on the main marsh. A flight rate in & out was 856/hr between 1255-1545. | " " |
| 4 | Mud Lake WMA | 43.53-112.25 (T7N,R37E,S35) | - | 200 | 6-12 | On n. side, by front gate. | " " |
| 4 | " " " | " " | - | 200+ | 6-14 | Watching from s. dike. | " " |

**Table 14, cont. Nesting Locations and Sightings of Franklin's Gulls in Idaho, 1993.**

| Map # | Location | Lat-Long. (TRS) | # Nests | # Birds | Date | Comments | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | Mud Lake WMA | 43.53-112.25 (T7N,R37E,S34) | - | 218 | 6-25 | Flight rate was 218/hr between 2015-2115 by tower, along n. side. | This Study |
| 4 | " " " | " " | - | 300+ | 7-9 | This is a large colony,all in deep water in the west marsh. Many young circled with their parents as I canoed throught he colony. | " " |
| 4 | " " " | " " | 600-800 | 2 | 7-21 | No adults were seen today, only 2 juveniles. | " " |
| 5 | American Falls Res. | 42.59-112.16 (T5S,R33E,S36) | - | 80+ | 6-15 | On the edge, resting, near McTucker Springs area. | " " |
| 5 | " " " | " " | - | 45+ | 6-17 | Along same edge at McTucker Spr. | " " |
| 5 | " " " | " " | - | 17 | 7-2 | Two groups of 10 & 7 adults were foraging at the mouth of the Snake R. | " " |
| 5 | " " " | " " | - | 80 | 7-25 | Gathering near the silo, at the dam. | " " |
| 6 | Palisades Res. | 43.08-111.03 (T3S,R46E,S36) | - | 36 | 6-19 | Flying over the village & res. | " " |
| 7 | Bear Lake NWR | 42.11-111.19 (T14S,R44E,S34) | 350-400 | 800 | 7-8 | Colony on the edge of Mud Lake, about 300 young produced. | R. Sjostrom |
| 8 | Island Park Res. | 44.25-111.35 (T13N,R42E,S36) | - | 6 | 6-29 | Over the Kilgore Rd. to Res. | This Study |
| 8 | " " " | " " | - | 70 | 7-17 | Over 50 gulls were hawking insects over the reservoir. No nesting. | " " |
| 8 | " " " | " " | - | 30+ | 8-4 | Over 30 gulls with young of the year feeding over the reservoir. | " " |
| 9 | Kilgore-Spencer Rd. | 44.30-112.20 (T13N,R37E,S24) | - | 6 | 6-29 | Over Rd. towards Duboise. | " " |
| 10 | Camas NWR | 43.54-112.16 (T7N,R36E,S18) | - | present | 6-16 | This species formerly nested on the refuge, but not now. | G. Deutcher |
| 10 | " " | " " | - | 60+ | 6-29 | Two flocks over toward Mud Lake. | This Study |
| 10 | " " | " " | - | 75+ | 8-4 | Sitting on Toomey Pond, with young of the year. | " " |
| 11 | Blackfoot Res. | 42.48-111.38. (T6S,R41E,S11) | - | 100's | 6-19 | Maybe coming from Gray's Lake, but 100's here. | L. Hlavaty |
| 11 | " " | " " | - | 15+ | 7-4 | Feeding over the reservoir. | This Study |

**Table 14, cont. Nesting Locations and Sightings of Franklin's Gulls in Idaho, 1993.**

| Map # | Location | Lat-Long. (TRS) | # Nests | # Birds | Date | Comments | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12 | Harriman St. Park | 42.40-111.30 (T14N,R43E,S27) | - | 1 | 7-16 | One gull feeding over Silver Lake. | This Study |
| 13 | Henry's Lake | 44.45-111.20 (T16N,R43E,S31) | - | 75 | 7-17 | Adults with young feeding over lake, hawking insects. | " " |
| - | Deer Flat NWR, Lake Lowell | 43.40-116.45 (T3N,R3W,S33) | - | 1-2,000 | 5-26 | Present in large numbers in migration, no nesting. | W. Stanley |
| - | Deer Flat NWR, Snake River | 44.12-117.05 (T7N,R5W,S22) | - | 1000+ | 5-26 | Present in large numbers in migration, no nesting. | " " |
| - | Kootenai NWR | 48.42-116.10 (T62N,R2E,S13) | - | - | 6-29 | Present on refuge, but not known to breed. | J. Reynolds |

**Total Range of Franklin's Gulls' nests = 8,250-10,900**

**BLACK TERN**
*Chlidonias niger*
**STATUS:** Federal Category 2 species (listing as threatened or endangered may be appropriate but conclusive data not currently available). Idaho Conservation Data Center rank is G4/S2 (not rare and apparently secure globally, but still cause for long-term concern; imperiled in Idaho).

*Distribution and Movements*
In the northwest, the Black Tern breeds from Canada southward to northern Nevada and northern Utah, and from the Cascade Range eastward. In Idaho, breeding birds are found from the north limit of the Snake River Plain southward, and in the northern panhandle. The Black Tern winters in Central and South America.

*Habitat and Nesting*
Black Terns eat mostly insects, as opposed to other terns, which are largely fish-eaters. They hover over meadows or grassy marshes while hunting insects in mid-air, or pick insects such as dragonflies or grasshoppers from tall grasses. Less frequently, they feed over open water by diving for fishes and crustaceans, or may pick food from the water with their bills.

Nesting is in small, loose colonies in marshy lake areas. Nests are built on muskrat houses or floating clumps of dead plants. the nest itself is a shallow cup of canes or reeds which holds the eggs just above water level. Clutch size varies from 2-4 eggs with three being the most common number.

*Survey Results*
Black Tern nesting areas are scattered over the marshes of eastern Idaho and perhaps the panhandle. Despite their low numbers, the overall population appears to be remaining stable. We searched unsuccessfully for these terns at both Minidoka NWR and at Mesa Falls Marsh, where they were found in 1984, but found a new colony at Craig Lake at the southern end of Blackfoot Reservoir. We did not enter any nesting colonies, but instead counted the adults (which are easily seen due to the fact that they spend considerable time in the air) and later on the fledged young birds. Through repeated visits to the marshes we obtained a sense of the adult numbers, as well as observations of them carrying prey back to the nests. Overall numbers are low, but the population we surveyed appears healthy.

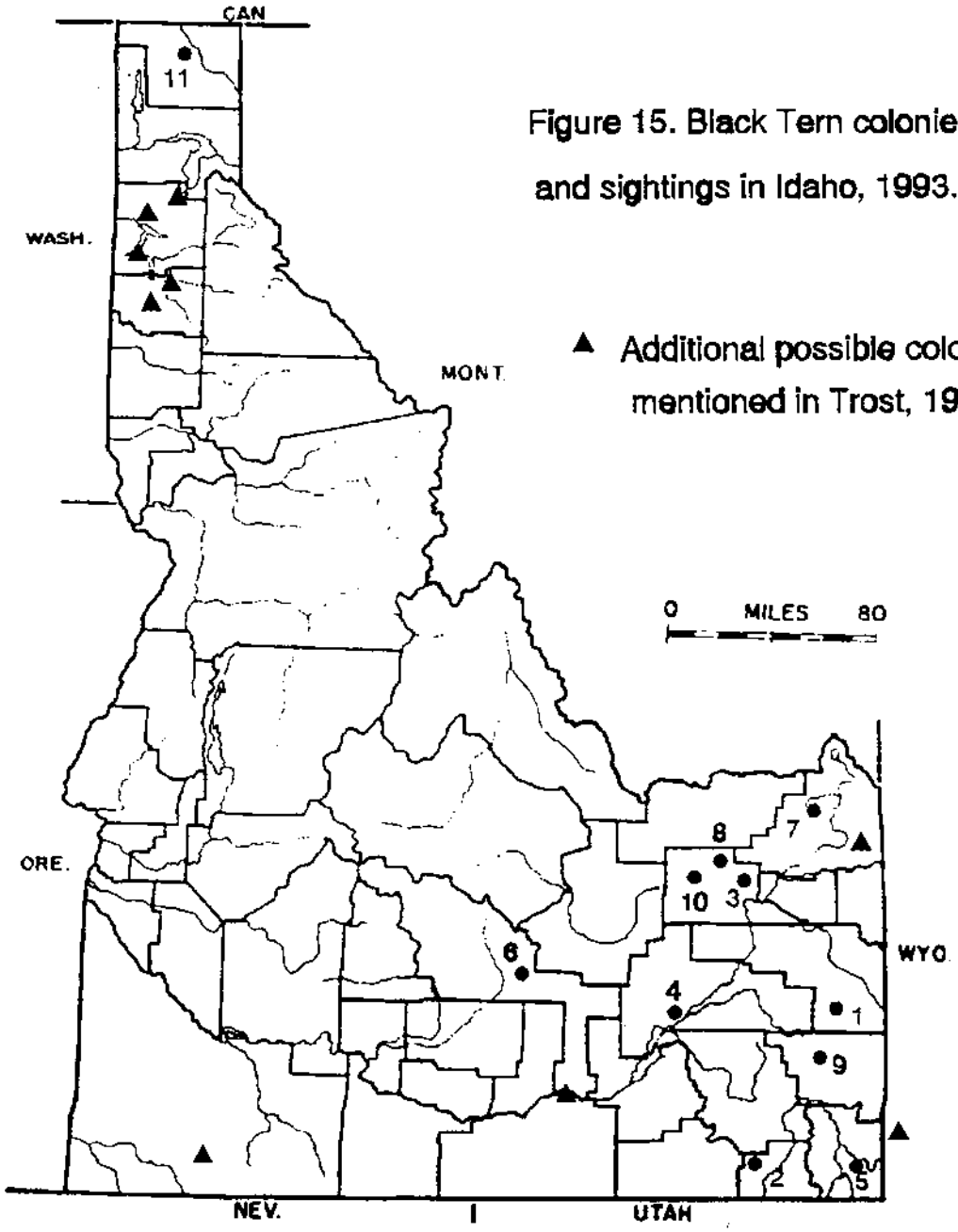


Figure 15. Black Tern colonies and sightings in Idaho, 1993.

▲ Additional possible colonies mentioned in Trost, 1984.